Preparing for Y2K

THE Army worked feverishly throughout 1999 to avert problems that might arise from the Y2K computer "bug" that threatened to disable uncorrected computers at 12:01 a.m. on Jan. 1, 2000.

Several years' work culminated in completed checks of some 25,000 Army systems that had to be corrected or replaced. The systems included those that control information management information, weapons, communications, intelligence, personnel data, finance and logistics.

Additionally, more than 475,000 personal computers, 50,000 pieces of network equipment and 70,000 facilities infrastructure items had to be tested then corrected or replaced.

The Army's lead Y2K agency, the Year 2000 Project Office in the Directorate of Information Systems for Command, Control, Communications

and Computers in Falls Church, Va., estimated that 75,000 Department of the Army personnel were involved in the Y2K effort and that it cost the Army roughly $603 million.

That was the sum for all the checks, fixes, system tests, contingency plan tests (in the event a critical system failed) and status reporting.

Virtually every computer application designed over the last 30 years was affected, as were roughly 10 percent of the 25 billion or so embedded systems worldwide, computer experts said.

Under a five-phase program to correct the Y2K problem, every affected system within the Defense Department was labeled as either critical or noncritical and placed in one of four categories: already compliant, being repaired, being replaced or being retired.

Phase IV, completed Dec. 31, 1999, validated the ability of the Army's computers to operate in 2000. Phase V is the actual successful operation of adjusted or replaced systems.